

MEDIA STATEMENT

The horror of Sharpeville should never be forgotten

Attention: Editors and Reporters

Monday 21 March 2022

Human Rights Day is commemorated annually on 21st March to honour the sacrifice of those who fell during the Sharpeville massacre on this day in 1960. This massacre claimed the lives of many people protesting against the Apartheid pass laws, including women and children. Another massacre that is often overlooked, which also took place on the 21st of March but in 1985, is the Langa massacre. The massacre occurred at a funeral of a slain anti-Apartheid activist in Maduna Square, where police opened fire on the crowd, killing 35 and injuring another 27.

Just like in Langa, most of the protesters killed in Sharpeville were unarmed and most were shot in the back. The horror of those days and those who died should never be forgotten.

While South Africa has made significant progress in the development of a culture of human rights we remain a deeply divided society still recovering from decades of structural racism and white supremacy.

Widespread poverty and inequality continue to present significant challenges in the attainment of human rights, freedom, and social justice for all.

While racial inequality remains an issue of ongoing concern, Tekano calls on all South Africans to commit to creating a country in which other human rights are given equal attention.

The ongoing xenophobia in South Africa is a violation of the right to equality on the grounds of ethnic and social origin. Xenophobia is a fundamental violation of the right to equality as enshrined in our Constitution. All South Africans should work to ensuring that the rights of migrants are observed and respected by all. The rights of non-nationals are protected by the law and these rights should be observed and respected.

And, while South Africa has made significant progress in the provision of basic rights, much still needs to be done to ensure that the right to water and sanitation, the right to access to health

care, and food, social security, and the right to access to education become a lived reality.

"As we strive to ensure the provision of basic rights for our people, we must ensure no one is left behind particularly highly marginalized and invisible groups such as persons with disabilities and their families who experience multiple and intersecting discrimination, harmful practices and lack of access to necessary health and other services." says [Innocentia Mgiijima-Konopi](#), an Atlantic Fellow based at Tekano and Human Rights lawyer whose work focuses on [mothers of children living with Albinism](#).

As South Africa remembers those who died in Sharpeville on the 21st March 1960, Tekano calls on all South Africans to reflect on the values of our Constitution and on how they can individually and collectively work to ensure that a culture of respect for human rights.

"These days are a reminder of the massacre in Langa and in Sharpeville they are a reminder of the blood shed for us to have freedom." says Chief Executive of Tekano, Ms. Lebogang Ramafoko.

It is our collective responsibility to give full effect to the powerful constitutional vision of dignity and equality for all in a united and democratic South Africa.

Persons with albinism the need for a human rights approach to address the experiences of discrimination, harmful practices, gender inequality, and lack of access to necessary services of mothers of children with albinism.

ENDS.

For more info or media interviews, please call **Bongani Maseko** on **061 545 9425** www.tekano.org.za